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Supporting the social and academic integration of first year psychology students within Higher Learning

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Abstract book

2019-03-06

When: Wednesday 16.30-17.00, Where: 21:237, Blåsenhus

Supporting the social and academic integration of first year psychology students within Higher Learning

10. Higher Education

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Abstract: Research topic/aim

The study programme of Psychology at Aalborg University receives 150 new students every year. But how to best support their learning environment and study environment? According to Tinto (1993), student retention and dropout must be understood as a question related to the culture of the educational institution and its ability to support the social and academic integration of students. According to Tinto, psychosocial integration and wellbeing are strongly related to a supportive culture of lecturers with respect to the academic integration. Starting from a PBL-pedagogical, Bildung and profession perspective, this paper more specifically raises the question: how can the lecturers and organizers of higher learning activities support the social and academic integration of first year psychology students?

Theoretical framework

In addition to the work of Tinto (1993) with respect to the social and academic integration of students, this paper adopts a Bildung-perspective that empathizes processes of formation, (role) models and ideals (Gadamer, 2004), as well as a profession perspective that empathizes students' identification with and embodiment of the professional habitus of the psychological profession (Bourdieu, 2000; Feilberg, 2014). Finally, drawing on an existential-phenomenological ontology of human being, students' lived experiences and activities are studied in the light of three aspects of being: the individual existence, the collective existence (relationships, peers, groups, year group, institution) and our anonymous, undifferentiated (pre-personal, pre-reflective) being, which permeates and precedes our differentiated individual and collective existence (Feilberg, Norlyk & Keller, 2018).

Methodological design

This paper draws on qualitative case studies and examples of psychology students' first year experiences at a PBL university, by focusing on the exemplary roles of the group supervisor, the seminar organizer, the lecturer, and the semester coordinator with respect to the academic and psychosocial integration of students. This involves empirical material from participant observation, student's reports and process descriptions, quantitative semester evaluation reports as well as empirical studies (Feilberg, 2014; Wiggins et al. 2016).

Expected conclusions/findings

The paper analyses the personal, social and collective aspects that often intertwine when taking up questions of learning, processes of formation and social-academic integration. In light of this, the paper presents theoretical distinctions and practical understandings that support lecturers and semester-organizers to build a sense of student's experiences and processes, and how we as lecturers can support their first year integration in our educational institutions.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The paper presents a PBL-pedagogical, Bildung and professional (habitus) perspective on the planning and implementation of an introductory semester in a higher learning context, with an emphasis on the consequences of the behavior and choices of the lecturer within different contexts. This is relevant to all first year lecturers and organizers within human- and social science studies.

List of References

Tinto (1993). *Leaving college. Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (Second ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Feilberg (2014). *Dannelsen af en psykologisk og videnskabelig habitus hos psykologistuderende*. Ph.d. thesis. Academic Books.

Wiggins, Chiriac, Abbad, Pauli, & Worrell (2016). 'What Can Psychology Do For Problem-Based Learning?' *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, Vol 15(2), 136–154.